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The Kite Runner

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Summary:

The story begins in December of 2001, describing a call that the narrator receives from his friend Rahim Khan. Rahim grants a request that Amir, the narrator, come visit him in Pakistan. After the phone call Amir goes for a walk through San Francisco and is recalls memories of his childhood friend Hassan. Hassan, who has a cleft lip, grew up with Amir. Together the two caused juvenile mischief where they lived in Kabul. Amir lived with his father, Baba, in a wealthy home, while Hassan lived in a small hut made out of mud with his father, Ali. Ali worked for Baba, which made Hassan and Amir’s friendship convenient. Although the two are great friends, Hassan and his father are Hazaras, while Amir and his father are Pashtuns. The Hazaras and the Pashtuns have a rough past, but now, the Pashtuns look over the Hazaras with spite. Amir’s reflection soon turns to his memories of growing up as a child with his father. He recalls that his father was a successful entrepreneur and a man of great stature. His father tries to raise him to be a man but rarely succeeds. Since Amir has taken a strong interest in poetry and reading, Baba feels a strong detestation for his son.

The story flashes back to a time when Baba and Ali were very young. Ali’s parents were both killed in a car accident, leaving Baba’s father to take in Ali as a child. The two do not consider themselves friends, due to the social barriers. In the same way, Amir does not view Hassan as his friend, though they spend much time playing games and hanging out. Amir tells about one time when he has written his very first story. Hassan and Rahim Khan both agree that his story is written with a higher level of skill, but Baba dejects the idea of Amir writing.

The story changes pace and Amir tells about how Afghanistan is becoming a republic. Amir and Hassan know not what it means for them, so they continue daily life. Gunfire in the street awakens Ali, Hassan, and Amir so they stay and hide in the home. The gunfire, they discover is a result of Daoud Khan’s coup to take over the government. Shortly thereafter, the boys are approached by a notoriously renowned bully. The bully, Assef, speaks of how his father and Hitler are in good company and that he agrees with Hitler’s idea of ethnic purity. In this, Assef feels that it is his duty to beat up Hassan, for being a Hazaran boy.

Analysis:

I am finding this novel to be more and more interesting as I read on. I can see how difficult it must be for all of the characters in this story. Ali, who is physically impaired himself, cannot provide much of a life for his son Hassan who too has physical impurities. Life for Hassan can be difficult simply for having a cleft lip. Being a Hazaran boy does not help his case either. In the same way, he must pretend not to realize the hatred that he is receiving from his peers. For Baba, life is successful, but constantly worrying about the future of his “unmanly” son must be stressful. Being in Amir’s shoes would also be difficult for a number of reasons. Amir must persistently be attempting to meet up to the standards of his father. Also having a Hazaran as a close friend must be arduous. Having to go against what the world is telling him about whom he can associate with cannot be easy. By being friends with Hassan, he must constantly protect him from the bullies like Assef.

Application:

This novel is a great representation of how people all around the world are the same. The inherent human characteristics that are passed down through time and culture are so evident. The Hazaran people are so hated, simply because of who they are as a group, not individually. People in this novel discriminate against the Hazaran people just as the blacks were mistreated in America during the 1960s. Just because someone is a different race than the Pashtuns, they show so much disdain towards them. The whites in America can tie a direct relationship to the Pashtuns in the novel. The whites looked down upon the blacks and showed no mercy. They believed the blacks had no place in society. In the same way, the Pashtuns resent all that the Hazarans do. The characteristics are the same no matter where in the world. The idea of a ruling race over another lesser race, for no reason other than hatred, is seen on opposite sides of the earth, therefore making discrimination a human characteristic spanning time and culture.